

JOINT STATEMENT
36TH PORTUGAL-U.S. STANDING BILATERAL COMMISSION

November 30, 2016 – Sintra

1. The Portugal-U.S. Standing Bilateral Commission (SBC) held its 36th Session on November 30th, to take stock of the recent developments in bilateral relations and to explore further opportunities for cooperation. The Co-chairs thanked the Mayor of Sintra for his excellent hospitality, allowing this meeting to take place in the historical setting of the “Palácio da Vila”.
2. Portugal and the United States share a close political, economic and strategic alliance, grounded in centuries of friendship between our peoples and governments. We cooperate to contribute to peace and security worldwide, to address common threats and challenges, to strengthen human rights and the rule of law, to expand development of science and technology, and to improve our economies through trade and investment.
3. The Commission discussed a wide range of topics of mutual interest and ongoing cooperation between Portugal and the United States, including the state of play of political, defense, economic, trade and investment, justice and home affairs, and science and technology relations, and cooperation with the Azores. Portugal and the United States agreed on their shared interest to expand and enhance their cooperation in all of these areas.
4. A comprehensive exchange of views on the **international agenda** took place. Portugal and the United States reaffirmed their commitment, as members of the international coalition to counter ISIL, to confront common challenges in Syria, Iraq and Libya, fight terrorism, counter violent extremism, and work together to address the refugee and migrant crisis, while fully respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Commission also recognized the positive participation and additional pledges of Portugal and the United States in the September Leaders' Summit on Refugees, and agreed to continue bilateral and multilateral cooperation in this field. The Commission took positive note of ongoing cooperation to promote global security and stability, including through contributions to missions in Iraq, in Kosovo and in the Sahel and Central Africa.
5. The Commission welcomed the election of Mr. António Guterres as the next Secretary-General of the United Nations and seized the opportunity to wish him all success. Portugal and the United States pledged to provide to Mr. Guterres all their support as he starts his mandate next January 1st, 2017.

6. The Commission took note of the work developed by the existing subsidiary bodies and acknowledged their contribution as platforms for guiding increased cooperation.
7. The Commission highlighted the excellent **defense cooperation** between our two nations. The Commission was briefed on the November 29th High Level Defense Talks, which focused on strategic defense cooperation, and the October 27th Defense Committee meeting, which included a summary of Army, Air Force and Navy talks.
8. The Commission commended the conclusion of negotiations on the bilateral Agreement on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue and gave support to its signature and entry into force, as soon as possible.
9. The Commission discussed developments since May, regarding the streamlining process of the United States Air Force (USAF) presence at **Lajes** Air Base. Portugal and the United States remain committed to the strategic use and importance of Lajes Air Base for their mutual benefit in line with the shared goal of contributing to global security.
10. The United States reiterates its commitment to ensure the support missions to the Lajes Air Field, in accordance with the operational requirements of the Air Base and in line with the agreed statements from the previous Standing Bilateral Commission meetings.
11. The Commission acknowledged that the process of reduction of Portuguese employees under contract by the 65th Air Base Group has been completed. The United States informed that the intended reduction of U.S. military personnel has also been concluded.
12. The Commission agreed on the need to continue working together on infrastructure issues, with the aim of achieving a mutually satisfactory outcome.
13. The Commission recalled the joint commitment from the last SBC meeting on the cottages, built by former U.S. personnel, and welcomed the intention by both sides to conclude their demolition by the end of calendar year 2017.
14. Portugal and the United States reviewed discussions on shared environmental concerns on Terceira Island, arising from U.S. facilities or operations at Lajes Air Base, and on appropriate remediation measures. The Commission noted that the environmental experts, appointed by the Technical Committee, have met and exchanged information on this issue.

The Commission urged effective action on the two sites already being addressed and completion of the review on additional sites.

15. The Commission agreed on the importance of addressing the incident at the Cabrito pipeline in forthcoming bilateral consultations.
16. The Commission was briefed on the state of play of **trade and investment** relations and prospects for the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (T-TIP) negotiations and expressed support for the continuation of negotiations.
17. On the **Azores**, Portugal and the United States had discussions on ongoing cooperation for the benefit of the region's economic development. The Commission took good note of the good progress with regard to the proposals presented by the Regional Government of Azores within the Azores Committee. The Commission reiterated the importance of the Azores Committee as an essential subsidiary body to follow-up on such initiatives and to discuss future proposals.
18. The Commission highlighted the valuable existing cooperation in **science and technology, environment and energy**. The Commission was briefed by His Excellency the Minister of Science, Technology and Higher Education of Portugal, Manuel Heitor, on the latest update of the Atlantic International Research Center (AIR Center) initiative, in follow-up to his most recent visit to the United States. Both delegations praised ongoing discussions towards the creation of the AIR Center, in the Azores, as a unique opportunity to promote science and technology through transatlantic and north-south cooperation. Minister Manuel Heitor invited the United States to participate at the upcoming Ministerial Summit and high-level Industry-Science-Government Dialogue on the "*Atlantic International Research Center* " which will take place in the Azores in April 2017.
19. The Commission praised the important contribution that both the Luso-American Development Foundation and the Fulbright Commission have given to bilateral cooperation in this area. The Commission highlighted the Memorandum of Understanding signed on 23rd November 2016 between Portugal's Science and Technology Foundation (FCT) and the Fulbright Commission to award 30 new grants in all fields of study to Portuguese researchers – 25 for pre-doctoral research and 5 for sabbatical research. It also noted a new Fulbright scholarship for U.S. researchers in marine resources supported by Instituto Português do Mar e da Atmosfera (IPMA).

20. The Commission reiterated that **justice and home affairs** remains one of the cornerstones of the bilateral cooperation between Portugal and the United States. The Commission praised progress in this area since the last SBC meeting and welcomed the expanding dialogue on cyber cooperation, including exchanges on furthering a framework for international stability in cyberspace; bolstering cyber security; fighting cybercrime; and fostering cyber security awareness and capacity building. The sixth meeting of the Justice and Home Affairs Committee will be held on December 16th 2016. The Commission also noted ongoing discussions on a draft bilateral Asset Sharing Agreement and expressed a desire to conclude it as soon as possible.

21. The Commission agreed to hold its next meeting in May 2017 in the United States.